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is too vitally modern to be decided arbitrarily by the fias of a past generation. We need, to be sure, all the help and inspiration for its solution that the past has to offer, but ultimately all these contributing factors must be put into the crucible and recast to fit the mold of actual conditions today. It may not be out of place here to remind ourselves

that the fundamental teaching of Jesus, and of the Hebrew prophets before him for that matter, is still our great ideal; namely, the establishment of a condition of society so thoroughly imbued with wisdom and grace that the marriage bond will truly represent what God has joined together and no man needs to sunder.

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## THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING AND SIN. I

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### PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

One questions his right to take this theme at all, for two reasons: First, because only experience of life can fitly interpret it, and without some depth of experience discussion of this dark problem is little else than mockery. One doubts the adequacy of his experience, and his capacity to see and feel deeply enough to justify discussion. One would not further darken counsel on this subject by words without knowledge. The second reason for hesitation is just because the problem is so old. It is in truth man's perennially darkest problem—the question of the ages—that seems to confront him with the constant and often-stated dilemma: either God is good and not omnipotent, or he is omnipotent and not good. No one of us can escape this challenge. In some form it concerns us all, whether our primary interest is religious or scientific or practical. At some point we all need an

assured conviction of the essential rationality of the world—that aims that compel our respect are ruling in the world. Is it at all worth while to discuss anew this age-long problem?

If, in spite of this double misgiving, and with no feeling that I have new and startling light to shed upon it, I am undertaking once more, at the editor's request, a sober survey of this most difficult problem of human existence, it is simply because even the oldest questions inevitably change their form with changing times, and so need to be reconsidered again and again; and because it is precisely in wrestling with our largest and darkest problems that our most fruitful insights are likely to come. A comprehensive, even if sober, resurvey of all that is involved in the problem of evil, natural and moral—in the question of suffering and sin—ought, then, to prove of some value. And this, in spite

of the fact that one has no expectation of solving the problem. It probably was not intended that complete demonstration should be possible to us here. One can only hope to give a series of suggestions that may help to faith, suggestions which themselves can be of weight chiefly to those who can interpret them out of their own experience.

From the start it is well to remember that we can know beforehand that there can be no demonstration of the reasons for actual matter-of-fact existences. We cannot demonstrate mosquitoes or snakes or potato bugs. We cannot demonstrate the grass or the grub or the bird. The concrete facts can never be fully reached and the necessity of their existence shown by any philosophy or any summary of principles, however widely accepted. The most that we could do at this point would be to agree on certain great ends that ought to prevail in any universe; to infer from these the probability of some larger necessary laws (although many so-called laws, especially in the physical world, are doubtless not primal necessities at all, but only widely prevalent matters of fact); and then to show that the existence of various matters of fact is not consistent with these ends and laws. It was long ago pointed out that reality has for all men three realms—the realms of the *is*, of the *must*, and of the *ought*; and we cannot have any hope of final unity in our thinking, except as we start from the *ought*. *Quite aside from any ethical interest*, the very meaning of these three realms of reality is such that we plainly cannot derive the *ought* from the *is* or the *must*. That a thing *is* does not prove that it *ought* to be. Nor even

that a thing *must* be, does it follow that it *ought* to be. We might have to regard it as an evil necessity. We mean something quite different when we say a thing ought to be, from what we mean when we say it is or it must be. If we are to get any final unity in our three realms of reality, then, it can only be by starting from the *ought*, proceeding to the *must*, as involved in the ends contained in the *ought*, and accepting the *is* as merely actual, not demonstrable, but also not inconsistent with the *ought* and the *must*. Our metaphysics, thus, as Lotze and Paulsen and Wundt all contend, must root in our ethics if we are to be able at all to believe in the final unity of the world. This initial consideration—the necessary primacy of the *ought* for any unity in the world or in our own thinking—is itself good reason for faith that purposes of good do rule in the world, that there is love and not hate at the world's heart.

There is a further preliminary consideration that may give us hope as to the final issue of our problem. The very fact, as I have elsewhere pointed out, that all men, practically without exception, feel somewhere the problem of evil—the difficulty of the suffering of the righteous, of the prosperity of the wicked, of much seemingly needless suffering—as well as the increasing sensitiveness at this point, itself shows that all men instinctively feel and make the universal assumption that a really rational world must be a world that is worth while, a world that can justify itself to a sensitive and enlightened conscience, a world that is not merely coldly logical but warmly loving. The fact that men so universally make this

assumption is itself good evidence that we may believe that the world will finally justify that assumption. For men are themselves a part, the last evolved part, and at least a very important part of that world which they are seeking to understand. They are, indeed, that part of the world in which the world itself has come to consciousness and to intelligent judgment. If their universal assumption is that this world must be a good world as well as a logically consistent world if it is to be truly rational and tolerable at all, then if that assumption is not justified the world has contradicted and condemned itself in its own highest product, and there is an end of rational thinking. For you cannot rationally think through a world fundamentally irrational. In that case, the fact of the human mind and the fact of the rest of the world do not fit, and cannot be made to fit. You could then only accept the universe in its entirety as a self-contradictory and evil thing, and utterly abandon any attempt to think it into unity. That would mean an end of rational thinking and of all philosophy, to say nothing of religion. And such a futile and chaotic outcome is itself a reason for faith that the contrary view, the view that all men assume as essential to a rational world, is justified. In spite of seeming contradictions, the world probably bears true witness to itself in men's instinctive demand upon the world and upon life. A controlling love, we may believe, is at work in the world. There is, then, some initial rational presumption that our problem is not insoluble.

One subordinate aspect of the problem of suffering—*the suffering in the*

*animal world*—has been much accentuated in our modern time, for two reasons: First, because with the progress of Christian civilization the sensitiveness to all suffering, even animal suffering, has greatly increased. And, secondly, because the tendency of the Darwinian theory of evolution was to formulate all development in terms of “the struggle for existence,” and so to seem to most minds to involve a terrible severity in the conditions under which life evolved, and a ceaseless preying of animals upon one another.

As to this whole question of animal suffering, it seems clear to me, in the first place, that, even if the Darwinian theory of evolution be fully accepted, the facts would by no means warrant many of the statements made concerning the cruelty and pain of the struggle. The word struggle itself—as applied to the whole biological field—tends to mislead. Surely we may well give heed at this point to the testimony of Darwin and Wallace themselves, as quoted by Drummond. Darwin says:

When we reflect on this struggle, we may console ourselves with the full belief that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive and multiply.

And Wallace expresses himself even more explicitly:

On the whole, the popular idea of the struggle for existence entailing misery and pain in the animal world is the very reverse of the truth. What it really brings about is the maximum of life and of the enjoyment of life, with the minimum of suffering and pain. Given the necessity of death and reproduction—and without these there could have been no progressive develop-

ment of the organic world—and it is difficult even to imagine a system by which a greater balance of happiness could have been secured.

Moreover, with continued study of the problem of evolution on the part of men of all schools, it is significant that there has been a marked recognition that there can be no such exclusive emphasis upon the struggle for existence, but that other factors have a large part to play. Thus, scientists are themselves insisting, to a larger extent than when John Fiske wrote the words, that "other agencies are at work besides natural selection, and the story of the struggle for existence is far from being the whole story." And the recognition of "these other agencies" greatly modifies the former impression, itself unjustified, of a pitiless and bloody warfare involving exquisite animal anguish at every step. In the words of Thomson and Geddes:

There is no doubt that the general tone and treatment of Darwinism, even hitherto, has been deeply coloured by the acute individualism of Darwin's and the preceding age. We may therefore restate here the concluding thesis of our own *Evolution of Sex* (1889), since elaborated in various ways by Drummond, by Kropotkin and others. It is that the general progress both of the plant and the animal world, and notably the great uplifts, must be viewed not simply as individual but very largely in terms of sex and parenthood, of family and association; and hence of gregarious flocks and herds, of co-operative packs, of evolving tribes, and thus ultimately of civilized societies—above all, therefore, of the city. Huxley's tragic vision of "Nature as a gladiatorial show," and consequently of ethical life and progress as merely superposed by man, as therefore an interference with the normal order of Nature, is still far too dominant among us.

There is, indeed, every reason to believe that the method of animal development chosen, costly as it undoubtedly is, was the least costly in pain; and that, in any case, the goal was worth the price paid. We have small reason to doubt that life itself for the animal involves general pleasure; and the aim in creation seems to have been, as Lotze has pointed out, to crowd each least cranny of the world with life and the joy of life.

The naturally growing sensitiveness to suffering has been further accentuated in our time, I must believe, by a falsely sentimental view of the animal world, that has led us to attribute to them sufferings that they pretty certainly do not have. There has been much exaggeration at this point. Men have naturally enough made themselves the standard for judging of suffering, and so have forgotten that even the highest animals have quite certainly a less sensitive nervous system than we, while the lower animal forms are almost out of comparison with men in this respect. Still less may we attribute to the animal world our mental sufferings and anxieties. Lacking all clear self-consciousness, animals suffer neither from memory nor from anticipation as do men. The popular animal stories have here much to answer for. One feels indignant at the amount of entirely groundless suffering that has thus been caused many persons by the assumption that there must be transferred to the animal world suffering that is to be found only among human beings. There is suffering enough among men in any case. Gracitously to increase it is inexcusable. And men need not carry the load that

comes from the thought of constant mental anguish among animals.

Moreover, one may well protest against such false animal psychology—glad as he may be to help every movement to relieve physical pain among animals—because the ascription of mental suffering to animals tends to draw attention away from the undoubted and far greater suffering of men, due to remediable conditions. In general, there is surely good reason to believe that pleasure in the animal world far outweighs pain; and that the organic world below man certainly holds no presumption that a cruel, heedless power is dominating the processes of evolution.

Passing, now, to our main problem—that of suffering and sin among men—it seems clear that any discussion of this question is useless that does not, first of all, make plain *the prerequisites of moral character*, the inevitable prerequisites that the world may be a sphere for moral training and action. For our whole problem is an ethical one. It is for moral reasons that we feel its pressure. The point of our doubt, indeed, is simply whether the world can meet the demands of a sensitive and enlightened conscience. Our very problem assumes, then, the final and intrinsic value of moral ends. We must ask from the world that it make character and growth in character at least possible. We can only play with our problem, therefore, if we are unwilling to make explicit to ourselves those prerequisites that must be fulfilled if the world is to be a sphere for moral training and action.

I can only answer, of course, for myself. These necessary prerequisites

seem to me to be six, as I have elsewhere pointed out: some genuine freedom of volition on man's part; some power of accomplishment in the direction of the volition; an imperfect developing environment; a sphere of laws; that men should be members one of another; and that there should be struggle against resistance. Now every one of these six prerequisites, it should be noted, involves the possibility of resulting suffering, and most of them, the possibility of sin. It is this paradox, therefore, which confronts us: That the world may be one that we can approve, it must contain conditions that involve the possibility at least of suffering and sin that we cannot approve. Character is an immensely costly product. We are not able even to imagine any way by which it can be cheaply produced. The degree of final satisfaction as to the solution of the problem of evil, therefore, will probably depend upon how deeply valuable character seems to us to be. If it seems to us of infinite worth, we shall not grudge the cost, but justify the process.

Let us look, then, at these prerequisites, if the world is to be a sphere of moral training and action. And, first, there must be, for the very possibility of character in man, *some genuine freedom of volition* on man's part. I do not purpose to reargue the old question of freedom. The will seems to me not comparable with anything else. I only have to say for myself that I share James's feeling, that if there be no power of genuine initiative in man, however limited in scope (as in unforced direction of attention, or in retaining of the passing thought for an instant, or in

simple approval or disapproval), life would be like "the dull rattling off of a chain that was forged innumerable ages ago." I find myself unable to conceive of character as a reality, or as in any vital sense uniquely man's own and not a mechanical product of outside, wholly unmoral forces, unless there be this incomparable power of freedom. Eucken's and Bergson's new emphasis on the will seems to me, therefore, a sane reaction from a too prevalent necessitarianism. I cannot see that character and moral problems have any meaning as such, without a clear recognition of freedom. One cannot have both mechanical explanation and moral freedom at the same time and at the same point. He must pay the price of a freedom that is not a play-freedom but real through and through. That there might be character at all, then, in the world, men must be not only self-conscious, but have the power of moral initiative. And for God this meant a certain divine self-limitation, and for men the possibility of choosing against God—the possibility of sin. This terrible possibility is the necessary price of free sons of God, who were free to choose to do his will.

Nor could there be denied to man, with volition, *some power of accomplishment* in the direction of his volition; though this involves the possibility of suffering on his own part and on that of others. This power of accomplishment may be decidedly limited, but it must be there. To grant man a mere resultless volition must be felt to be, as Lotze suggests, "sophistical." Some results of our volition are needed to make our act real and to reveal the char-

acter of it even to ourselves and to others. Man's whole being calls for such expressive activity, if there is to be any "realizing sense" of the meaning of inner states. This, then, is one answer to the natural question, Why was not the world so made that only good designs could be carried out, or that evil volitions would be at once frustrated? The volition is truly revealed only in the light of its logical consequences, and the worst of these are in the realm of personal relations. A world in which that was impossible would seem, then, to be no fit world for the moral training of a finite developing creation. Ethical considerations must decide here. Life cannot be a play. It can certainly be no farce. Both God and man must be in dead earnest with the fact of freedom.

An *imperfect developing world*, therefore, in the sense of a world in which many things may occur, because of men's choices, which in and of themselves ought not to be, is needed for the development of moral character in man. Even those other natural imperfections that belong to an earth in process probably make an actually more suitable environment for a creature developing toward character than a world conceived on more final lines. An imperfect developing world is fitted to an imperfect developing man. The imperfect here is the more perfect. Such a world calls out man's powers, challenges him to achievement, stimulates him to moral purposes, trains him in moral action.

But it may be felt that while doubtless the granting to a man of resultless volition would be sophistical and futile, at least the results might be confined

to the man himself. And it is with this difficulty that the still more fundamental fourth prerequisite of a moral world has to do: *that men should be members one of another.* Of the fact there is no manner of doubt. Ought it to be a fact?

Now it is quite conceivable that men might have come into being quite independently of one another, and be in as absolute isolation as Leibnitz' "windowless monads," or as the chemical processes going on in a multitude of utterly disconnected test-tubes. It would be a more than Robinson Crusoe-like existence, with no personal relations either in memory or in vaguest anticipation; though a shadowy kind of purely individualistic morality would be still conceivable. In such a world the results of the processes in one individual could not in the least extend themselves to others. Would it be a better world, a world that we ourselves would prefer? We can at least see that all that we most prize in this world would be absent in that, even though certain evils would have vanished also. Such a world could not be properly called a *universe* at all. There would be as many absolutely independent worlds as there were individuals. Unless relations, at least of knowledge, were admitted, there could apparently be no significant enlargement of life. There would be no need by one life of another, and no possibility of service. All the possibilities of personal relations—of friendships—would be cut off. Love would have no meaning; and, indeed, so far from being the sum of virtue, it could have no existence. Anything that could conceivably be called a moral universe, with all the infinite and endless significance that that fact con-

tains, would have utterly ceased. That would seem to be the world we must have if we are to insist that results of an individual's conduct are to be confined to the individual himself. In other words, the very possibility of such a moral universe as we know and feel the need of demands that we shall be members one of another, knit up indissolubly with other lives, with all that that involves. But in such a world the results of conduct must register themselves chiefly in personal relations. Where wrong choices are made we can cause and be caused suffering. Those personal relations in which lie the most exquisite joys of life contain inevitably like possibilities of pain. Sin thus necessarily carries suffering with it, even the suffering of the innocent. The world is not a play-world. But it may well be remembered in exactly this connection that this very fact of our inevitable membership in one another is one of the greatest of all restraints from moral evil, and one of the greatest motives to good.

Once more, that the world may be a sphere of moral training and action there must be a *sphere of laws* in the structure of the world on whose operation men may steadily count. Such a sphere of laws is not only not opposed to freedom, but is necessary to give to freedom any field of action; for the possibility of all growth and accomplishment in knowledge, in power, and in character depends upon it. This implies that character is a becoming, a growth, an accomplishing on the part of each individual; and cannot possibly be inherited or passively received. It can realize itself only as it sets worthy goals and works toward these goals. But such a sphere of laws—while

it alone can save us from the wild chaos and resultlessness of a lawless world—does necessarily involve also the possibility of much suffering, and of suffering not due to sin, properly so called, but to ignorance of the laws of nature. Such suffering is not properly to be regarded as punishment, or as “sent by God.” It needs, as LeConte says, only knowledge of and conformity to law.

And finally, as to the prerequisites of moral character, we know no way of growth in character that does not involve *struggle*, resistance, repeated choosing of the right against the solicitation of the wrong. So that we may well believe with Martineau that even “the ills of life are not here on their own account, but are as a divine challenge and Godlike wrestling in the night with our too reluctant wills.” This need of struggle and resistance seems to be an inevitable law of life. Growth and discipline of character require it. And it is this law that Browning makes the old rabbi so effectively voice:

Then, welcome each rebuff  
That turns earth's smoothness rough,  
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but  
go!  
Be our joys three parts pain!  
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;  
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never  
grudge the throe!

For thence,—a paradox  
Which comforts while it mocks,—  
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:

What I aspired to be,  
And was not, comforts me:  
A brute I might have been, but would not  
sink i' the scale.

Must this necessity of struggle and resistance be still called a psychological defect in our natures? The question may indeed be raised. But once more it seems fairly clear that, so far as human insight is able to go, one is obliged to conclude that if the conditions were otherwise, it would be only a play-world in which we live; that character is too stern a thing for one pleasantly to drift into; and that a good that could be so achieved would seem to us too cheap a goal, quite unworthy of our steel. The heroes, someone has insisted, are those who can *stand* the world as it is.

I have included the prerequisites of moral character under “preliminary considerations,” but I do not mean to suggest thereby that they are not vital to the argument concerning the problem of evil. On the contrary, it is hardly too much to say that the whole case might be rested upon this consideration of the prerequisites that are necessary to the development of moral character. For the man who clearly sees what those prerequisites are, and what possibilities of suffering and sin they involve, and who believes at the same time in the infinite value of character, will find in these very facts a comprehensive answer to his questioning.